



## Sustainable Campus Community Engagement

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# Sustainable Campus Community Engagement

## Vice-Chancellor’s Research Grant Scheme (2011-2012)

### OVERVIEW

There has been a growing interest in sustainable development across government departments, business groups and the community sector reflecting a major shift in thinking about the importance of sustainability in our day-to-day lives. Many universities around the world have taken initiatives to make their campus communities more sustainable. A sustainable campus can be defined as “a higher education institution ... that addresses, involves and promotes ... the minimization of environmental, economics, societal and health negative effects in the use of their resources in ... its main functions of teaching, research, outreach and partnership, and stewardship ... to help society make the transition to sustainable lifestyles” (Velazquez et al., 2006:815).

An important initiative is the Talloires Declaration, which represents a voluntary environmental agreement for incorporation of sustainability on campus. As of June 2012, this declaration has been signed by 430 universities in over 50 countries (ULSF, 2012). However, some literature has shown uncertainty in effectiveness of voluntary environmental agreements. Although many firms have signed up to voluntary environmental agreements, the actual outcome of pollution mitigation is not significant (Koehler, 2007). A survey of universities in the US that have signed the Talloires Declaration reported that campuses have done well in conventional measures such as recycling, but have been reluctant to implement tougher initiatives, such as promoting alternative transport modes (Shriberg and Tallent, 2003). Carlson (2006) noted that university initiatives on sustainability are only minor steps for “greenwashing”. Thus, there is much scope for improvement in developing sustainable campuses for many universities.

Although universities have traditionally been improving their sustainability through operational measures, their community also plays an important role to affect lasting changes towards greater sustainable practices. Sarkissian et al. (2009:6) noted in their book, *Kitchen Table Sustainability*, that “communities are the heart and hands” of all sustainability movement, regardless of its context. In this sense, mobilising and motivating staff and students to take practical steps towards a sustainable campus is also an important aspect of creating sustainable campuses.

The objective of this research was to test and apply a 6-P community engagement framework for creating sustainable campuses. The framework was developed by Too and Bajracharya (2010) based on a review of literature in various disciplines such as planning, marketing and psychology (e.g. Olander and Thogersen, 1995; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000; Ottman et al., 2006). The 6-P framework identified factors (both intrinsic and extrinsic) that that would encourage environmentally sensitive behaviour among university community members. A pilot study was conducted to test the applicability of the 6-P framework at Bond University through in-depth interviews with 24 staff and students. The interviews revealed that the 6-P framework is highly applicable to the university community. In particular, the psychological factor was found to be important for engaging the community of Bond University. Based on the interview findings, this study has developed a community engagement strategy for Bond University, which will be significant in positioning Bond as an active sustainable campus and therefore contributing to the broader goal of environmental protection.

### KEY REFERENCES

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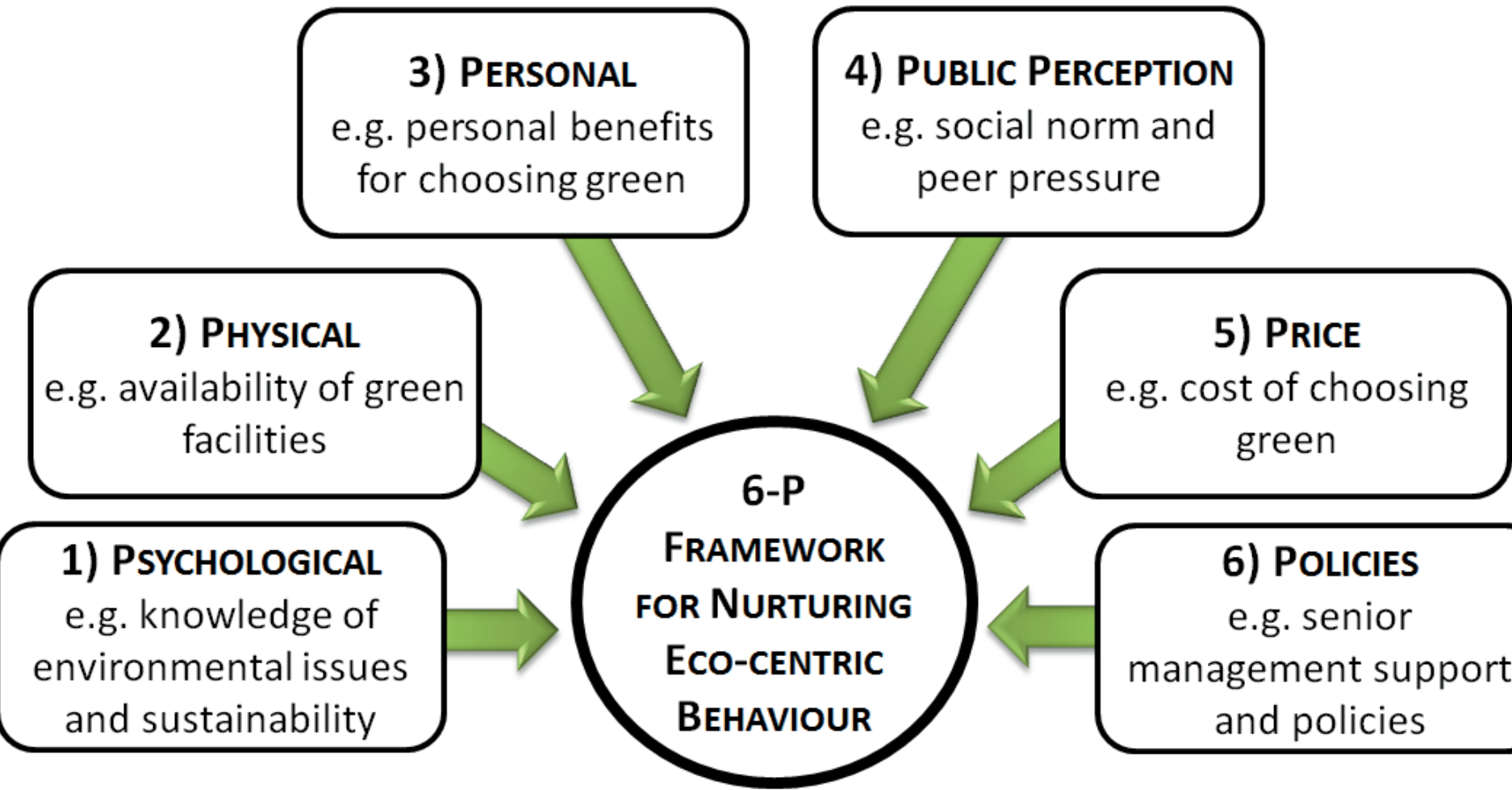
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Sustainable university model (Velazquez et al., 2006)



6-P framework (Too and Bajracharya, 2010)